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WICHITA BEACON

Vulcan dump TV show's hazard site

By Gary Haden
Wichita Beacon staff

An ABC television documentary Thursday night that listed Wichita among cities with a hazardous waste disposal problem was generating telephone calls and confusion earlier today.

By 10:20 a.m., KAKE-TV had logged 51 phone calls. Most callers, said a switchboard operator, wanted to know the location of the hazardous disposal site. A few wanted to thank the station or wished to complain that they had not been warned earlier of a site's existence.

Most callers, said Bill Andrews, director of promotions, assumed that Wichita had been listed as a city with a hazardous waste problem because of an industrial waste disposal site near Furley.

State and local officials, however,

said today that the site operated by Kansas Industrial Environmental Service is not the reason that Wichita's name appeared on the list of cities with hazardous waste problems.

Rowena Michaels, of the regional office of the Environmental Protection Agency, said the list shown by ABC came from a longer list released by the EPA in November. At that time the EPA listed 103 cities as having "potentially dangerous" waste problems.

Wichita was included because of a chemicals dump adjacent to Vulcan Materials' plant on the southwest edge of Wichita.

"The site operated by KIES near Furley is not a problem. We monitor that closely, taking samples at least quarterly," said Joe Cronin of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

Cronin, a hazardous waste specialist, and Don Carlson, chief of the KDHE's industrial unit, said Vulcan's site might be called potentially dangerous, but that it is not now dangerous.

Carlson said wastes from pesticide manufacture and from production of a wood preservative are buried near Vulcan and are dangerous, but that they have been closely monitored since about 1970, with precautions taken to assure they do not reach ground water.

Jim Boyd, Vulcan's manager in Wichita, said the waste site has been completely covered by clay that is relatively impermeable to water.

"We feel the site has been rendered harmless, by monitoring and our program," Boyd said. "What we had was a relatively solid material that was relatively insoluble in water, and we have completely encapsulated it in

clay. It is on our property so we have total control. It's not on a public site where someone might inadvertently drill through it."

Bernie Laverentz, marketing manager for operators of the Furley waste disposal site, said "I was sure they weren't talking about us.

"We are a permitted state facility. We're not in any way operating without proper authority. The legislation that they were talking about in the program is the kind of criteria that we meet at our site."

Laverentz said the KIES site is bonded and insured, which means that even should something happen to the company, money would be available to monitor the Furley site.

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